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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 8223  
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

MONDAY, JULY 16, 2007

In Today's Papers

Election Rallies

All papers: Today's papers give extensive front page coverage to the ruling AKP's rally held in Istanbul yesterday. Conservative *Turkiye* and Islamist-oriented *Zaman* and *Yeni Safak* report that over one million people attended, while tabloid *Aksam* referring to police records, reports that 350,000 people attended the rally. Leftist-nationalist *Cumhuriyet* reports that the AKP used municipality resources to bring supporters to the rally location, with mainstream *Sabah* reporting that AKP supporters were transported to the site by 1600 busses, 17 ferries, and many other small boats and a train. AKP leader Prime Minister Erdogan criticized the main opposition party CHP leader Deniz Baykal sharply and said that the CHP distorts economic facts in its election ads. Mainstream *Milliyet* claims that the AKP municipalities have been distributing food packages, clothing, coal, furniture, stationery, scholarship and money to over two million families.

Meanwhile, the mainly Kurdish DTP organized a rally in Istanbul yesterday to introduce the independent candidates they support. Former DEP deputy Leyla Zana addressed the people and said that Istanbul is a place for "multi-voices" and freedom. She delivered her remarks first in Turkish and then in Kurdish.

*Yeni Safak* reports on a poll conducted by the KAF agency. According to the survey, 49 percent of Turkish people consider having a strong economy a priority issue. Thirty-nine percent think that having a democratic administration is a priority and twelve percent believe that having a strong military has prominence.

Turkey Makes Energy Deal with Iran

Weekend papers, *Hurriyet*, Today's *Zaman* and *Yeni Safak*: Papers report on the Memorandum of Understanding signed between Turkey and Iran to bring natural gas from Iran to Europe through Turkey. Sunday's *Yeni Safak* noted that while Russia works on the Southern

Stream gas project, by-passing Turkey in the shipment of Turkmen gas to European markets, Turkey has made a secret deal with Iran. Today's Yeni Safak reports that the project will end European dependency on Russian natural gas and will increase Turkey's importance on energy issues. Turkey will become a key energy base with the Turkmenistan line to be developed, in addition to Baku-Ceyhan, Blue Stream and Kirkuk-Yumurtalik lines. Sunday's Hurriyet and Radikal say that the agreement will help Turkey finalize the Nabucco project. Tabloid Aksam says that the US is "disturbed by the deal" with Iran. Writing in the business daily Referans analyst Erdal Saglam says that the deal will "strengthen Turkey's accession negotiations with the EU." Also in Referans, analyst Faruk Demir writes that the US "cannot ignore the role of the deal in ensuring global energy security" and while the US is working on different scenarios for coping with the Iranian risk, "Iran is the only alternative to balance Russia on petroleum and natural gas issues."

Ferai Tinc says in the mainstream Hurriyet: "Even though the natural gas deal seems like an important step on energy, it is far too early to talk about breaking the Russian monopoly. Most important of all, the signed deal between Turkey and Iran is only a Memorandum of Understanding. In the history of the energy sector there are many unrealized documents like this. Iran is in urgent need of energy infrastructure investments especially at this time of growing pressure due to the nuclear crisis. Thus any infrastructural investment by Turkey in the Iranian energy sector is very important for Tehran. But this effort, even though Ankara believes that the deal does not violate sanctions, may pose a conflict vis-à-vis the UN resolutions. The details of this energy project will be worked out in the months to come -- after the Turkish elections. Even if the technical details are worked out, the construction of a natural gas pipeline is another big question

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mark. It is better to not to draw any hasty conclusions. As for the announcement of this deal as a 'finalized energy deal with Iran,' it only seems like election propaganda."

#### Editorial Opinion on US Efforts Against the PKK

Semih Idiz comments in the mainstream Milliyet: "The US is keeping a close watch on the possibility of a Turkish cross border operation. I think it would serve US interests if the US, instead of watching Turkish military activity at the Iraqi border, exerted its energy watching the PKK more closely and passed target-oriented information to the Turkish military. By doing that, the US would show its good intentions in support of its ally against the common threat. And also such an effort would be able to prevent an undesired cross border operation by the Turkish military. It would equally help the US counter the accusations about direct or indirect help to the PKK.

Washington acts in a hard-to-understand manner on this issue which causes the production of anti-American scenarios. In a country where anti-Americanism is at a peak, the best course would be concrete action rather than public relation efforts."

TV News:  
(NTV, 6 A.M.)  
Domestic News

Concussion bombs placed in front of AKP and MHP election offices in Buca town of Izmir exploded with 10 minutes intervals yesterday causing material damage

Forest fires rage in Milas, Bodrum and Alanya. Houses and hotels have been evacuated in the area.

FM Gul denied allegations to the effect that Istanbul metropolitan municipality gave a billboard renewal tender worth 5 million Turkish Lira to his father's company.

#### International News

A car bomb exploded near a busy shopping square in central Baghdad on Sunday killing at least 10 people

A new bin Laden video praises martyrdom as a weapon and a path to

glory for Muslims.

WILSON